

TONI HERCEG

Review article  
Received 29. X. 2017.

TONI HERCEG

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Mostar

## TATTOOS OF CATHOLICS IN CENTRAL BOSNIA – SYMBOLIC ORNAMENT OF THE BODY AND SOUL

### Abstract

Traditional tattooing custom represents an important ethnological unit in the cultural history of BiH. Permanent puncturing of skin, mostly practiced with the female part of population, is an anthropological specific phenomenon of Catholics from Central Bosnia. According to historiographical notes it is a part of mysterious prehistoric Illyrian heritage. But it seems that with the Ottoman occupation of medieval Bosnia a more autonomous and rich, ornament phase came as far as tattooing culture of Catholic women is concerned. That is a phase of “cross tattooing”, which was symbolically changed, for the purpose of saving life and identity in front of the coming islamisation, into new confessional garment. The intention of the paper is to explore, describe and comment, consulting the relevant authors and publications, autonomous and significant but extinct tradition of Catholics’ tattooing in (Central) Bosnia.

*Key words:* tradition; tattooing; symbols; Bosnians; Catholics; Central Bosnia; ethnology; Ottoman occupation and islamisation